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ABSTRACT

The document explains how practitioners of nonformal education can improve educational programs by employing various evaluation techniques. The document is presented in seven chapters. Chapters I and II review problems of evaluating nonformal education programs. Major problems are that evaluation is often performed by outside evaluators, overemphasizes long-term results, and is not flexible enough to consider the loosely stated objectives and content of most nonformal education programs. Chapter III focuses on methodologies which have been used to evaluate nonformal education programs. Chapter IV identifies criteria to help practitioners adapt evaluation methods to nonformal educational settings. Evaluation methods should be employed which involve limited skill, low time and cost demands, minimal program disruption, high prospect of utility, and flexibility. Chapter V points out how to adapt evaluation methods in program design, instrumentation, teaching techniques, application, and use of results. Chapter VI identifies other considerations for improving practitioner evaluation, such as creating an environment conducive to evaluation and providing evaluation training for practitioners. The final chapter offers conclusions. It is suggested that policy makers, academicians, and educational funding agencies support and develop evaluation methods which provide immediate feedback. Also, practitioners should concentrate on evaluation methods which can be used on a repeated basis without external direction. (DB)

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EVALUATION IN NONFORMAL EDUCATION:

THE NEED FOR PRACTITIONER EVALUATION

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EVALUATION IN NONFORMAL EDUCATION: THE NEED FOR PRACTITIONER EVALUATION

All too often the main result of education program evaluation is a report that finds a resting place on office shelves. Carried out in the name of helping practitioners provide better services to the program clientele, outside evaluations typically appear to be addressed to funding agents, policy makers or academicians with a sanguine hope that somehow benefits will filter down to participants. Meanwhile, in exchange for time and energy borrowed from program personnel and participants, there is little left behind of immediate use. This pattern becomes particularly burdensome when applied to nonformal education programs with weak infrastructures and tenuous relations with voluntary participants.

One way of starting to correct this frequent exercise in futility is to encourage more evaluation on the part of program practitioners. Closer to program needs and constraints, the practitioner is more likely to demand practical short-term results and to be accountable to the clientele. An important bottleneck in making progress with practitioner evaluation is the paucity of evaluation methodologies or techniques that are feasible for self-employment. Most existing options, if transferred to nonformal education program settings, have time and skill demands beyond the means of a practitioner or are disruptive in their implementation. Those working in the field of evaluation, as well as

their sponsors, need to give more attention to this issue of how practitioner evaluation can be facilitated. The following discussion is intended to suggest some considerations and approaches that may be useful starting points in addressing this need.

THE PROBLEM AND THE NEED

The past decade has witnessed an increasing interest in educational options outside the classroom. Internationally, these have been referred to as "nonformal education," though the term still has different meanings for different people. In general nonformal education programs may be viewed as those which provide an intentional, organized series of learning experiences for out-of-school youths or adults. Some consider the term to include programs based on the formal system, such as field learning experiences for students. Others think in terms of programs that lead into the formal system, e.g., second-chance programs for adults who may ultimately transfer into formal programs or get credit for formal certification. Most typically, though, the term nonformal education refers to short-term and non-degree programs organized by bodies outside the formal school system, designed for voluntary participants, and oriented to perspectives or skills that are immediately useful for some developmental objective. In this sense the term may include self-contained educational programs, such as those for adult literacy, vocational training, public health, or personal development, as well as educational programs integrated into community development, human service, agricultural extension, youth club or other activities.

As existing evaluation methodologies have been applied to such nonformal education programs, three general types of problems in adaptation, or non-adaptation, have revealed themselves. While these are not altogether specific to nonformal education, they are particularly acute and significant in a nonformal context.

An initial problem is that many evaluation activities tend to be oriented more towards measurement of program outcomes than towards assessment of inputs and improvement of ongoing processes. The overall effectiveness of an educational program, and its relative efficacy in comparison with other alternatives, is obviously a question of ultimate importance. And an answer to this foremost question of funders, academicians and policy planners can have formative value in improved programming in the longer term. But for those planning and implementing programs, as well as for participants, the focus and apparatus of such output evaluations can be onerous.

For the nonformal educator, constrained by limited time and concerned with the immediate issue of running a more effective program, devoting energy to assessing outputs often appears to be a low priority. And in some situations the evaluation process may even be disruptive. Practitioners' wariness and defensiveness regarding evaluation is not unrelated to a history of evaluations geared to long-term benefits and outside audiences, especially since such evaluations have often overlooked participants' and practitioners' needs for better inputs. Token efforts to include components of formative evaluation in an overall

assessment of program outputs have usually failed to increase practitioner confidence in the efficacy of evaluation. Furthermore, in many nonformal education programs, inputs and support systems are so weak or unstable that, until they are improved, an evaluation of overall program results is premature.

A second problem is that existing evaluation strategies and methodologies are typically not very well adapted to the context of many nonformal education programs. Often a given methodology presupposes conditions that do not exist in a nonformal education setting. For instance, a methodology may depend upon there being a certain level of administrative and financial organization or support; but nonformal programs often have a very primitive organizational base in which available time, skills and funds are barely sufficient for day-to-day operations, or in which sources of financial support and decision making are not clear. Most methodologies assume some specificity in regard to program objectives and content; but many nonformal education programs have unstated or confused objectives, and even vacillating content. Programs themselves may be intermittent, without clear beginnings and endings. A methodology may assume some degree of uniformity or stability of program personnel and participants. Frequently, however, there is a high turnover of staff, many of whom are part-time or volunteer workers. Characteristics of the participant group, such as age of participants or extent of formal schooling, may change over time as people come and go at irregular intervals. Finally, and importantly, existing methodologies

largely presume organizational and instructional hierarchies wherein administrators direct teachers in some respects, and teachers direct students in others. Indeed, evaluators are accustomed to get guidance from, and report to, the top decision makers in a program. Some non-formal education programs, however, are philosophically--and sometimes practically as well--committed to a bottom-up or participatory approach where initiative is encouraged from participants, where the program is to be responsive to expressed participant needs, and "teachers" are viewed as learning facilitators. Here the traditional evaluator's stance tends to be incongruent with the philosophy, and unless adapted will cause reactions ranging from opposition to outright rejection by both staff and participants.

Insufficiently adapted approaches to evaluation of nonformal education programs are also costly. Methods may break down, yield irrelevant results, or be rendered obsolete by program developments. When an evaluation must be "retooled" to cope with these developments, the cost may approach, if not exceed, the operating budget of the program. But the costs of poor adjustment are not only financial. The process of traditional evaluation has in some instances disrupted tenuous balances within a program, or between staff and participants. And not infrequently evaluation results miss significant elements that are not anticipated or easily quantifiable.

Thirdly, most evaluation methodologies are not sufficiently adapted to be useable by practitioners as a part of their on-going development

of nonformal education programs. A typical evaluation methodology depends upon trained, somewhat sophisticated evaluators to employ it, with the result that someone from outside the program has to come in to do the evaluation. When occasionally there is an attempt to train program personnel to continue the evaluation procedure, the demands of the procedure and the constraints of the nonformal education context are such that the evaluation cannot be sustained or be meaningfully related to program planning and revision processes over time. Consequently staff members of nonformal education programs frequently perceive evaluation as being synonymous with complex methodologies, and do not view it as something which they are able to do themselves. Whether due to this or to other reasons, programs where there is systematic internal evaluation beyond normal questioning, record keeping and observation are rare.

There obviously is a need for continuing refinement and adjustment of evaluation procedures used by outside evaluators so they may be more suitable to the particular conditions of nonformal education programs. This is true whether the intent is to acquire new knowledge about such programs and measure their effectiveness, or to produce insights that will have a more direct formative value in program improvements.[1]

But for practical as well as ethical reasons, concerted attention must be given to the development of evaluation options that can more feasibly and usefully be employed by practitioners themselves. With greater practitioner ownership of an evaluation process, the possibility that the focus will be on problem areas or objectives that are considered

to be most pressing by front-line program people is increased, and the likelihood that the findings will actually be used in immediate program improvement is greater. If practitioner ownership means concentration on evaluating and improving program inputs rather than on the more difficult task of measuring outputs and producing generalizable findings, this may be a most appropriate initial emphasis in many programs. As suggested earlier, nonformal education programs are often so weak on the input side that improvement here is vital before an evaluation of overall results can be meaningful. In addition, the process of such short-term formative evaluation can produce insights, and tentative indications of effects, that may be useful for a better eventual evaluation of overall results. While direction by practitioners would improve the prospects of evaluation being adjusted to the particular setting of the nonformal education program, it presumably would also alleviate some of the insensibilities that often accompany traditional outside evaluation activities. For instance, the process would be less apt to ignore cultural considerations or to disrupt the program, and more apt to yield short-term benefits for the program and its clientele.

If evaluation by practitioners is to be more viable there have to be methodological options that are more carefully geared to formative purposes and nonformal education settings. These options have to be simple enough for use by minimally trained practitioners with limited time while being capable of yielding results that are at least more sound and useful than those derived from casual observation. The pur-

pose of the following sections is to identify more fully what might be considered in the development of such options for self-employable evaluation by practitioners.

THE STATE OF THE ART

An initial step in adapting evaluation for use by practitioners is to consider the nature of previously adapted methodologies. A few preliminary surveys and summaries of evaluation approaches related to aspects of nonformal education have already been done.[2] Rather than to review the findings of such surveys, the intent here is to make some general observations about the state of the art of adaptation in regard to formative evaluation, nonformal education settings, and practitioner use.

Formative Evaluation

In recent years increasing attention has been given to formative evaluation, as evidenced by the more than 200 titles given in ERIC under this heading. While these provide a rich variety of approaches, they tend to focus on feedback that takes place during the course of program development. Less well represented are assessment methodologies that can be used before the initiation of a program. Various funding agencies have appraisal guidelines for project designs that focus attention on assessing needs, resources and objectives. The methodologies for gathering such data, however, are often not clear or are dependent on trained

outside specialists. And often insufficient attention is given to anticipating and evaluating context variables that may affect the success of the program and should be considered in program planning or design. For instance, What are the incentives or disincentives for participation in setting or changing objectives? What is the opportunity structure which may allow or not allow an application of what is learned? What delivery constraints should be anticipated and dealt with in planning? Where occasional attention is given to such factors, appropriate methodologies for assessing them are in short supply.

Specific pre-planning methodologies for needs assessment or participant-interest assessment have been developed.[3] Often these presuppose a user with a significant amount of training and time, and a clientele that is culturally and conceptually able to articulate "needs". Some programs have run into difficulties when their planning has primarily been derived from a needs or interests assessment and subsequent implementation is weak. Here it might be more appropriate to start with a "strengths" assessment--In what areas or respects is the organization best able to perform?--and then match identified strengths with significant needs. Methodologies for identifying and evaluating strengths are a neglected complement to needs assessment.

A special variety of pre-implementation evaluation is represented by the pilot testing of a curriculum component so that it can be revised before general use, or the field testing of an educational material before it is adjusted for reproduction. Here a number of productive pro-

cedures have been developed, but again they presume a reasonably high level of available skills and resources.[4]

Formative evaluation during the course of a program's implementation has received considerable attention, whether the feedback-for-correction deals with participants, personnel or the program itself. A survey by Sara Steele gives various examples of such methodologies.[5] While ample, most methodologies require time and expertise. The least developed type appears to be a goal-free methodology that includes the important dimensions of unanticipated results or effects.

Evaluation Adapted to Nonformal Education

With the new interest in nonformal education on the international scene in the past decade there have been concomitant attempts to evaluate such activities, usually stimulated by funding bodies. Typically the methodologies employed have been transferred from academic or relatively sophisticated administrative contexts with limited adaptation to the nature and constraints of nonformal education program settings. Internationally most works on the evaluation of nonformal education have been written by economists, and while problems of adaptation are noted effective adjustments are still rare. The most significant efforts for adaptation have occured in North America in relation to social and adult education programs. Several years ago, for instance, Carol Weiss took some preliminary steps in relating the principles of academic evaluation research to the evaluation of social programs designed to improve human

welfare.[6] While allowing for the turbulent conditions of social action programs, the methodologies Weiss considered still involved the application of sophisticated skills and assumed a relatively developed social and organizational infrastructure. Subsequently various approaches have been devised that are more in line with the limitations of personnel and program conditions. An example of this is the SHAPES system developed in Toronto for process evaluation in community development programs.[7] And in the field of adult education there have been several works that suggest approaches relevant to these settings.[8]

Although such efforts represent a promising movement towards adaptation, there still remains much to be done if evaluation is to be better adjusted to types of resistance to evaluation, possibilities of program disruption due to the evaluation process, and the nebulous nature of program conditions that often exist in nonformal education. There is a particular need for a wider range of simple evaluation options that take into account the different possible uses of evaluation as well as the various degrees of operational constraints that exist in less organized nonformal education settings.

Adaptation for Use by Practitioners

Since most evaluation methodologies have been developed by academic specialists who are largely accountable to other academics or funding agencies, very few represent viable options for an ordinary staff person in a nonformal education program. Encountering such an evaluation

methodology, the practitioner may be put off by its unfamiliar terminology and concepts, by its skill and resource requirements, or by doubt that its immediate, formative results would be sufficient to merit the effort and program cost. Indeed, the evaluation literature contains few examples of low cost, low demand methodologies that a harried nonformal education practitioner would find attractive and feasible for use in day-to-day program development. Those that do emerge in parts of practitioner-oriented books or occasional articles appear to be the products of those who move between the university and field programs, willing to risk criticism in the former context and hoping to offer something that is practical and useful for the latter. Some other examples occasionally appear in project documents, the work of practitioners who reach beyond the tasks of planning and implementation to find aids for assessment, reflection and revision. It is to this paucity of evaluation options for use by practitioners in nonformal education, and the possible means for enriching them, that we will now turn our attention.

CRITERIA FOR ADAPTING METHODS

Certain characteristics are prerequisite if an evaluation approach is to be useable by practitioners in nonformal education. The range and relative importance of such features will vary according to the different nature of particular programs. But it is possible to identify several categories of criteria that should at least be seriously considered in adapting an evaluation method for use by practitioners in a

given type of program setting. In our preliminary efforts to develop a battery of such adapted methods at the Nonformal Education Program of the Center for International Education, University of Massachusetts, the following criteria have emerged as important prerequisites for useability.

Most basically, an adapted method apparently needs to have limited skill, time and cost demands. The technical skills required to carry on the evaluation have to be within the range of existing, or easily trainable, skills of typical practitioners. The amount of time required to use the method should be limited since personnel are usually overloaded with other program responsibilities. And considering that most programs are on small budgets, the method must have minimal financial requirements. These criteria seem to be minimal requirements if a method is to be self-employable over time and free from dependence on outside expertise and funding.

Depending upon program conditions, other types of criteria may be desirable, if not essential. For instance, methods might be assessed in terms of program disruption and client resistance; it is often important that these effects be minimized. An evaluation approach needs to be as unobtrusive as possible since the relation between a nonformal education program and the voluntary involvement of its clientele is often tenuous: there is a narrow margin of tolerance for any extra activity that places a burden on participants. Understandable, demystified procedures should be employed and the threat of judgment minimized if resistance is to be avoided.

Practitioners' suspicion and sense of futility regarding evaluation highlight the need to consider a method's capacity to produce locally useable results. The method may need to have a relatively high prospect of utility if it is to gain acceptance. This implies that the evaluation needs to be formative, that it contribute to planning or problem-solving needs whether they arise before the initiation of a program activity or during its implementation. The method should permit reasonably rapid feedback of evidence. Both the timing of the inquiry and the nature of the evidence provided have to be meaningfully related to program decisions and revisions. These requirements are probably easier met if the method is oriented more towards assessment and improvement of program inputs than towards measurement of program effects. But ways of gaining useful indications of the latter can also be devised within the constraints noted above. In some cases this criterion of perceived utility may be served if the process employed in the evaluation is seen to have beneficial effects in itself, independent of whether the findings are immediately useful in decision making.

If a method is to be freed of sophisticated elements and a dependence on outside experts, it needs to be associated with a pragmatic view of what is sufficient quality. For the practitioner the crucial question is not whether the results of an evaluation activity are valid or reliable per se, but whether they contribute to an improvement of the program and benefit the participants. On one hand, evaluation results that distort reality cannot help, and may even hinder, participant and

program interests; on the other hand, a method primarily oriented to achieve statistically generalizable results is unlikely to meet the requirements of short-term utility, self-employability and unobtrusiveness. In most cases a method will be sufficient for practitioner purposes if the results are both more accurate and more useful for program improvement than those obtained by normal everyday observation.

The "undeveloped" nature of many nonformal education programs virtually mandates evaluation approaches that allow for non-quantifiable indicators and goal-free dimensions. While there are obvious advantages in measuring the achievement of stated objectives quantitatively, quantitative methods may be ill-suited to the nonformal education program context. The objectives of nonformal education programs are often unclear or are in flux. The usual process of clarifying objectives, translating them into behavioral outcomes and developing quantifiable indicators by which to measure them, may require more skills, time and organizational stability than are available in a program. In any case, some of the most important things happening in such a program are not readily quantifiable; and others are not anticipated in any of its goal statements. Instead of evaluation approaches that "bias" the results by defining the problem only in terms of what is intended or what is quantifiable, adaptations are needed that are open to the unexpected and unquantifiable. This may involve consideration of means for gathering and processing subjective insights alongside more concrete indicators.

Since nonformal education programs encompass a range of different

characteristics, evaluation options that are suitable to a variety of program needs and constraints should be explored. Just as the transfer of a method from a formal to a nonformal program setting can pose problems, so can transfer from one nonformal education program to another, or even from one program component to another. A method appropriate for a program with a salaried professional staff may not be suitable for one run by part-time volunteers. Or a method that works in a vocational training program based on top-down transmission of skills may need major adjustments in another program where a participatory philosophy calls for staff to be learning facilitators rather than instructors. Such adaptations may take the form of a battery of alternative methods or of a method that can be modified in several different directions to meet various conditions or purposes.

The use of criteria such as these in the creative adaptation of evaluation options requires a somewhat uncommon stance if the developer is more of an academician than a practitioner. Typically there is a tendency to start with one's head in the world of formal evaluation principles, methods and standards, and then to put out one's hand to adjust these so they will address applied program needs. In most nonformal education programs, however, it is more promising to begin by putting oneself in the practitioner's shoes, taking his or her constraints and pragmatic needs seriously, and then to draw upon principles and techniques that may help produce an approach that is both feasible and productive as a self-employable aid. Some direct experience in such pro-

grams would seem to be vital in obtaining this perspective. Much of the thrust of traditional evaluation is towards developing unbiased procedures and objective measures; and often concern for the biases of the measures and of the respondents is greater than concern for the biases of the outside evaluator. The use of the above criteria presumes a willingness to have faith in the experience and on-the-line perception of the practitioner as evaluator. An adapted method should help him extend or refine his perception.

APPROACHES TO ADAPTATION AND ORIENTATION OF METHODS

If one is to use such criteria and make the effort to develop evaluation alternatives that are suitable for practitioner use, a number of developmental approaches are possible. The following suggestions may serve as a preliminary list of considerations for those who share this concern and want to give thought to enriching the range of feasible options.

It should be noted that in an evaluation activity there are a number of possible component parts. These include: Plan--Design--Techniques--Instruments--Application--Use of Results. Whereas the basic ideas behind the following suggestions may be applicable to all components, they primarily refer to those in the middle of the continuum. The first three suggestions deal with ways of deriving and arranging options; the last two are considerations regarding orientation and use.

Making Evaluation Explicit: An Incremental Approach

Evaluation is inherently a natural part of the process of everyday thinking and problem solving. Presumably relevant evidence is identified, given a value and related to some position or action. The issue is not so much *if* to evaluate, since the practitioner is at least implicitly doing this anyway, but rather *how* to evaluate more explicitly, accurately and effectively. An incremental approach to developing adapted methods would build upon this natural process.

The first step would be to make the *de facto* process of evaluation, and its relation to decision making, more explicit. Among one or a group of practitioners, What questions are asked? What data are considered pertinent? How are they obtained? On what basis are they weighed or valued? Next the strengths and weaknesses of the natural but now explicit process would be assessed. One way of doing this might be to look at each phase and estimate if there are significant distortions involved. Another could be mutually to assess the adequacy of a decision, and then to ask where and how in the natural process could the soundness of the decision have been strengthened. Then simple options for improving the areas of weakness could be devised. Here ideas from existing evaluation methods might be borrowed as possible solutions for improvement, but care would need to be taken that they be designed and applied as incremental improvements.

An important value of this approach is that the current practice which is its starting point, is at least already feasible, though perhaps

not effective. The challenge is to find incremental measures that are still feasible while leading to greater effectiveness. The major question is whether improved methods developed in this manner are transferable to other programs. Preliminary experience with this approach suggests that ideas derived from this process may have broader applicability than initially would appear to be the case.

Adapting Sophisticated Models: An Extractive Approach

Despite the limitations of many existing evaluation methods as self-employable options for practitioners, they often contain principles and elements of potential use for this purpose. Indeed, the current methods that purport to be self-employable have typically been extracted from the outlines or components of existing methodologies. As this continues it should be possible to develop better guidelines for the process of adapting, or deprofessionalizing, existing methods so they may be useable by staff in nonformal education. The procedure we have used for this type of adaptation is as follows: 1) Select an existing method that seems to be relevant to a known program need and setting; 2) Draw out the essential outline or concept from the method without its refinements; 3) Specify the operational constraints and options in the particular context for application, considering the criteria noted in the previous section; and, 4) Adapt the essential elements to the criteria and setting. The adequacy of the resulting adaptation is of course determined only by its use and its results in an actual program.

Grading the Options

Systematic practitioner evaluation is often inhibited by the perception that one must choose between using overly demanding methods and undertaking no systematic evaluation. The literature contains numerous examples of methods that represent horizontal options, namely different ways of meeting a given type of evaluation need. What is missing are different vertical options: alternative methods for meeting a given need that differ according to the degree of complexity and to the inputs needed to carry them out. The graded option approach attempts to fill in the excluded middle by offering a series of possibilities that proceed from the least demanding and most "rough" to those that are increasingly demanding and refined.

Options may be graded according to varying levels of constraints. What form could a method take if there was very limited time, no funds or trained skills available? What form could it take if there was more time, limited funds and some skills available? What form if there was a significant amount of these resources with which to work? Alternately, one could grade options according to the complexity of the question being asked, considering what sampling techniques and instruments would minimally be required to answer it with sufficient accuracy and benefit. For example, if one were evaluating an educational material, possible questions could be graded from the simple to the complex: Does it attract and hold attention? Does the audience perceive information included accurately? Is what is presented learned? Are attitudes changed? Is be-

havior changed? Options in sampling could range from a single person to a random sample and control group, depending upon the complexity of the question asked and the degree of accuracy needed. Similarly, options in data gathering or analysis could range from direct observation and inferred conclusions to systematic data gathering and multivariate analysis.

Our field experience in nonformal education programs has revealed numerous instances where an awareness of elementary or middle range options is enough to spell the difference between there being some and there being no evaluation done by staff people. In preparing educational materials, for example, practitioners typically feel they do not have the time or expertise to pre-test materials before publishing or distributing them. Yet when one practitioner took one hour to inquire whether three different types of participants found a prototype material attractive and could rephrase its major points, and found the answer was no, a need for possible revision of the materials was highlighted which otherwise might have been overlooked throughout the program. As is often true in other aspects of such a program, the most important question is the simplest and first question. Why evaluate the effects of a material if it does not reach the audience and cannot be understood? Graded options allow the practitioner to deal with the most basic question that is relevant in his program setting.

Relating Evaluation to Decisions

Most evaluation methods are related to decision making, but differ

in terms of the scope and timing of the decisions they are designed to inform. Thus they range from feedback systems, which provide continuous evidence on a variety of program variables that can be used as needed when a decision is faced, to methods that are oriented to specific and anticipated types of decisions, to evaluations of outcomes that can be used in some analogous future decisions. Many nonformal education programs are organizationally not able to initiate or sustain comprehensive and continuous methods. Furthermore, decisions may be difficult to anticipate, and when they are apparent there is often little lead time before the decision has to be made. Adaptations to close the gap between evaluation and decision making can be derived from current practice or from existing models, as indicated above. Considering the suggested criteria for feasibility, one might beneficially arrange these methods in the form of graded options. Such adaptations could address the need for simple and periodic feedback procedures, or deal with guidelines for identifying priority decisions where evaluation can most usefully be considered. Particularly useful would be to disaggregate evaluation-for-decision making methods and develop ad hoc options that can be used quickly when there is a critical incident or a pressing decision suddenly becomes apparent.

Participatory Evaluation as a Developmental Aid

Evaluation is often viewed as an activity which is principally carried out by a single evaluator or a team, whether from outside or from

within a program. Other staff and clientele usually are encouraged to assist in clarifying needs and obtaining evidence or insights that will improve the quality of results. This is important, and indeed there is a need for better guidelines by which to judge where and how, with a given method, greater participation can be both feasible and useful for such purposes. But in many nonformal education programs there are other prime, if not prior, needs for development that are not related to practitioners' decisions per se. Program clientele, for instance, may be mechanistic or narrowly pragmatic in their use of the program without reflecting on their experience, making use of its learning potential, or "owning" the process. Practitioners' expectations and assumptions may differ from those of their colleagues and clientele, and there may be serious discrepancies in communication. Or again, discouragement and failures may result in reduced involvement and energy, a loss of momentum or even dropouts among practitioners and clientele.

Experience has shown that a participatory evaluation process can serve to remedy such problems, even if the results are not particularly valid or reliable in themselves, and even if the process is not oriented in the first instance to program decisions. In considering methods of participatory evaluation that are directed towards serving such developmental needs there are numerous models in the pedagogical and group dynamics literature that could be made operational for nonformal education programs. And in some cases natural processes of participatory evaluation in practice can be built upon. How can group evaluation be used to

facilitate reflective thinking and self-directed learning? How can it be used to promote practitioner understanding of the clientele and the latter's communication with staff? And how can it be employed to look at failures and discouragement, and to process these so as to regenerate energy for renewed effort and involvement?

Again options graded according to the time and skills involved are needed here. The staff and clientele of many nonformal education programs can absorb only limited levels of wider participation in collective evaluation. And in some settings there are cultural stances towards authority which pose limitations to the scope and nature of what can be attempted. These constraints may help to set a framework for grading options in participatory evaluation.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

In the foregoing discussion on needs, criteria and approaches for adaptation, the focus has been on evaluation methods that can be used by practitioners without outside support. The availability of such methods is a necessary precondition for improved practitioner evaluation, but is in itself not sufficient. Besides this central task there are two other complementary areas that need development. One is the creation of supporting conditions or contexts which encourage personnel to undertake and sustain the use of whatever methods are relevant. The other is the existence of feasible training strategies to help personnel understand and use adapted methods.

Creating A Favorable Context for Practitioner Evaluation

While an absence of explicit or effective evaluation by practitioners in a nonformal education program is in part due to a paucity of sufficiently adapted methods, it may also be due to a context that discourages or does not adequately encourage evaluation per se. Insofar as this is a constraint, there is a need to explore how contextual conditions can be developed that promote and sustain a will to evaluate. An analysis of the sources of resistance to practitioner evaluation in such cases can provide the basis for devising alternative means by which such resistance might be reduced. And from another perspective, a range of possible incentives that encourage evaluation can be considered, as well as possible ways of providing them. To some extent the context can be improved by the adapted methods themselves if they are designed to be, for instance, less threatening and more rewarding in their process and results. But the context can be addressed more directly. How can a practitioner be administratively shielded from undue exposure and vulnerability stemming from an evaluation process? How can consciousness be raised on the cost of not evaluating, or on the range of possible benefits to individuals and the program? Can or should those undertaking evaluation activities be commended or otherwise rewarded for their effort?

It is relevant to note that in practice some practitioners develop an explicit evaluative style of observing, reflecting and revising that does not represent a clear method but is nonetheless effective. Also, some groups of individuals seem able to create a climate where this type

of evaluation occurs spontaneously and intermittently at someone's initiative or in face of an arising need. What seems to allow or encourage this phenomenon--experience, security, commitment, mutual reinforcement, etc.? Is there a clue here for ways to create a more favorable context for evaluation?

Creating Training Options for Practitioner Evaluation

Alongside adapted methods and a supporting context, some type of training for evaluation is usually a necessary concomitant of practitioner evaluation. Such training can have a number of functions: to free personnel of inhibiting preconceptions of what evaluation requires; to create awareness of the usefulness and feasibility of new options; and to develop ability to apply and use the results of some of the more feasible alternatives.

Given the limited additional time and energy most practitioners have for activities beyond their regular program tasks, planners need to devise low demand training strategies that can be employed by outside trainers. One possible approach to this would be to develop training modules for different types of content that are graded according to different amounts of time available. Thus, there could be one hour, three hour, or somewhat longer modules which could be used in conjunction with a staff meeting, a conference or a free weekend. Another approach would be to specify various methods by which an outside evaluation specialist could incorporate practitioner training into the process of setting up evaluation procedures or actually doing an evaluation.

SOME PRELIMINARY CONCLUSIONS

The limited development and use of adapted evaluation procedures which are self-employable by practitioners in nonformal education is understandable. The general approach to adapting methods advocated here has not been notably encouraged by higher echelons. While some practitioners identify appropriately adapted methods as a priority need in the field of evaluation, many have mentally closeted evaluation as something to put up with, as something that is more done to them than for them. Indeed there are too few model experiences where evaluation both has been oriented primarily to benefit program personnel and clientele and has, in process or findings, yielded recognized and immediate benefits for this audience. And where there have been promising attempts at adaptation for self-use, the results have been compromised by inadequate training or inhospitable conditions that militate against sustained effort.

If this situation is to undergo significant change, involvement is particularly required of two groups. Funders, academicians and program policy makers have to value criteria that stress immediate usefulness to a program and useability by its personnel on an ongoing basis. Beyond valuing, efforts to meet this need have to be given support and reward from these quarters. To balance the typical emphasis placed on generalizability, macro-funding decisions and academic soundness *per se* in evaluation, there also has to be willingness to sponsor the development of rough but adequate methods which in the short-run may do nothing more than help specific programs improve their inputs. In the case of

many nonformal education programs, this "less" has the promise of amounting to more.

A second group, those concerned with evaluation and training methods, have to be willing to take criteria for adaptation, such as those noted above, seriously in developing practical options for use by program personnel. Straddling the worlds of theory and practice, they need to relate the strengths of one to the needs and constraints of the other. Once a variety of options relevant for different levels of field constraints is devised, these need to be field tested and revised. In other words, the developer needs also to be a practitioner in the sense that he follows through at least initially with the practical application, evaluation and improvement of the adapted methods themselves.

In the final analysis the measure of the value of this approach and the resulting methods lies in their use and perceived utility over time by program staff. For a given adapted method, is there evidence of its being adopted and used by practitioners in nonformal education on a repeated basis without external direction or rewards? If a developer were rewarded on the basis of this criterion of use and utility as much as on evidence of publication there might be more progress. The justification of most evaluation activities is that ultimately the program participants or clientele will benefit. If self-employed evaluation procedures can lead to immediate program improvement, then the participants may in fact as well as in intent be beneficiaries.

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